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Message from the Mayor

Another great retail store opened its doors this week in the District of Columbia.

On Monday, I was happy to cut the ribbon on the very first Bed Bath & Beyond store in the Nation's Capital. This might sound like a small development, but the truth is that the store's arrival is another sign that our retail environment is growing by leaps and bounds. And as our retail environment grows, our tax base expands – which means more funds for our city's vital needs.

Bed Bath & Beyond is one of those stores that everyone's been to at least once. But if you live in the District, you've had to travel to Maryland and Virginia to shop at Bed Bath & Beyond. Now, we've finally got one of our own. And it couldn't be in a better place – downtown, anchored by the MCI Center and a revitalized shopping area and within steps of the Gallery Place Metro stop.

Seven years ago, when I first took office as Mayor, the area around Gallery Place was a neighborhood that was in disrepair. What a difference a few years and a lot of teamwork makes. Today, the area is a living, breathing, economic engine of jobs, commerce and activity – all in a transit-friendly urban city center.

At Gallery Place, we've already got places like Lucky Strike bowling, Urban Outfitters, Aveda, City Sports, and now, Bed Bath & Beyond. And across the city, we're seeing more retail on the way:

- Our first Target is on the way to Columbia Heights.
- A sorely-needed Giant Food is coming to Ward 8.
- We're working on bringing the first Costco to the city.
- A West Elm furniture store is coming to the old Woodies building downtown.
- And we've got three Harris Teeter grocery stores on the way to the District.

All of it is the result of smart planning and implementation by the community, business leaders, investors, developers, real estate brokers, and the city government. We're working harder than ever to expand our city's retail environment, and our efforts are surely paying off.

For more information about Bed Bath & Beyond, visit bedbathandbeyond.com.



AGENCY WEBSITES

Department of Human
Services

Office of Tax and
Revenue

Department of Parks and
Recreation

Department of
Employment Services

Metropolitan Police
Department

Office of Boards and
Commissions

Commission on the Arts
and Humanities

LINKS TO OTHER WEBSITES

Hands on DC

DC Convention and
Tourism

DC Public Library

Welcoming *This Old House* to the District

Another TV series has come to the District for filming – and this time it's truly a community effort. Last week, I attended a taping of the Emmy-award winning PBS series *This Old House* with Master Carpenter Norm Abram and host Kevin O'Connor.

This Old House worked with Mi Casa Inc. to chronicle the rehabilitation of the circa 1879 Italianate brick row house located just ten blocks from the White House in the Shaw neighborhood. Mi Casa Inc., a District-based nonprofit, builds and renovates homes for sale to low- and moderate-income families. Mi Casa Inc. was selected through a Request for Proposal process as the developer of this home by the Mayor's Home Again Initiative, a program designed to help eliminate blight throughout the city.

Some of the projects for restoring the house include:

- Recreating historic details of the Victorian entryway and ornamental ceiling medallions;
- Eliminating the water-damaged interior stair and creating a new functional-yet-elegant semi-circular staircase;
- Adding modern amenities like a fully appointed kitchen, central air, and a laundry room.

The Home Again Initiative demonstrates my administration's continued commitment to neighborhoods and to creating more affordable housing opportunities in markets where rising home prices make it more and more difficult to find reasonably-priced housing.

Home Again has two goals. First, it encourages property owners to rehabilitate and/or occupy their vacant and abandoned residential property. Second, it acquires, disposes of, and rehabilitates properties when owners fail to maintain them. Home Again is fulfilling its mission to help eradicate vacant and abandoned properties across our city.

Today, we are reducing the number of vacant properties and converting vacant property into productive residential use. Since 2002, nearly 350 properties have been renovated as a result of Home Again's efforts.

I was excited to work with *This Old House* to bring national awareness to nonprofit and local government partnerships. Together we're preserving the economic and racial diversity that makes Washington, DC, a great place to live. For information on when to catch *This Old House* on TV, please visit: thisoldhouse.com/toh/tvprograms/tvschedule. And for more information about Mi Casa Inc., please visit: micasa-inc.org.

Working Together to Protect Consumers

National Consumer Protection Week has come and gone – but it's very important to spread the word about the steps the District government has taken to protect you as a consumer.

Through their joint outreach effort, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) and the District's Office of the Attorney General (OAG) continue to focus on educating and empowering DC consumers in the fight against fraud. Our city's Consumer Protection Week theme was "Common Sense = Consumer \$ense."

Nearly 25 million Americans – 11.2 percent of the adult population – experience consumer fraud each year, according to a survey by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). In an annual report detailing consumer complaints about fraud and identity theft in 2005, the FTC put our city on its list of major metropolitan areas with the highest per capita rates of consumer fraud.

The bottom line is that too many Americans experience consumer fraud each year. As Mayor of the District of Columbia, I'm extremely pleased that we're combining forces to empower District residents so that they don't become the next victims of fraud. The District of Columbia has had some of the nation's strongest consumer protection laws since 1976. But funding for enforcement of these laws under the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs was suspended in 1994.

As part of DCRA's Fiscal Year 2006 budget, the Council approved funding for an Office of Consumer Protection. The office will focus on education, mediation and enforcement primarily in the areas of home improvement and car repair. Consumers in the District of Columbia need more protection. DCRA is the only agency that has "Consumer" right in the name – so I couldn't be more pleased that we're putting these protections back where they belong.

At a press conference last week, DCRA rolled out an Internet-enabled business license verification system that allows consumers to check to see if local rental properties, auto repair shops and home improvement contractors have the necessary licenses to do business in the District. The verification system, consumer protection tips and guidelines can be found in the Consumer Corner on DCRA's website, dcra.dc.gov.

These tools can arm District residents with knowledge and information so that they can steer clear of unscrupulous businesses and avoid getting stuck with incomplete, inadequate or shoddy work. OAG's focus during National Consumer Protection week was on educating DC consumers about common sense approaches to money and giving them the facts about payday loans, rent-to-own stores and pawn brokers.

In the past year alone, OAG has successfully recovered more than \$500,000 in consumer restitution from its consumer protection and antitrust enforcement actions, and has handled approximately 650 consumer inquiries and complaints.

For more information about consumer protection in the District of Columbia, visit the OAG website at oag.dc.gov. Consumers who think they've been treated unfairly by a business can also call DC's Consumer Protection Hotline at (202) 442-9828.



BRC Alerts

DCLMPC Partnership
Works!

DCOA Spotlight on Aging

DHS Outreach

DISB DC Financial
Gateway Express

OAG Inter Alia...

OAPIA Updates

OPGD Grant Funding
Alerts

Federal Spending Will Support District's Priorities

President Bush last week proposed \$143 million worth of new spending projects for the District in the Administration's Fiscal Year 2007 budget, which the White House has sent to the US Congress. It's an increase in overall funding, which is great news for the District of Columbia.

The increase reflects the strong relationship we've built over the years between the Mayor's office and officials at the Office of Management and Budget, and the greater understanding on the part of the Bush Administration of the needs of the people of our city. The relationship between the District and the White House has never been better and all District residents are the beneficiaries of this close partnership.

Among the many notable items in the Fiscal Year 2007 budget is \$20 million to upgrade the Navy Yard Metrorail station. The Southeast corner of the District is booming with new jobs and new homes, a trend that has helped fuel the District's current revival. To help accommodate the large federal presence in Southeast, the Office of Management and Budget agreed to contribute \$20 million to expand the capacity of the stop. The expanded Metro stop will ensure that the crowds at our proposed new ballpark for the Washington Nationals will never have any trouble arriving or departing from games, and residents of the area will not experience traffic delays.

Also included in the FY 2007 budget:

- \$41 million for the three-sector approach to education in Washington – public schools, charter schools and scholarships;
- \$35 million for the city's popular Tuition Assistance Grant Program;
- \$1 million for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council;
- \$8 million for planning and security costs associated with federal events in the District;
- \$7 million for sewer upgrades;
- And, finally, \$30 million for improvements to the DC's aging library system.

The Administration's commitment to our library system has tremendous potential for us as we begin a complete overhaul of our neighborhood branch libraries and build a new, state-of-the-art central library so that our public library system is equipped for the 21st century.

An Important Report on Our Public Schools

I've always said that creating lasting change in our city's public education system is a team effort. That's why it was great last week to join education leaders from across the District to discuss the release of an expansive study of the District's public schools by the DC-based Council of the Great City Schools.

The report, "Review of Finance and Budget Operations of the District of Columbia Public Schools," offers valuable insight into District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) spending and provides recommendations for internal management changes and strategies for deploying resources.

Produced at the request of DCPS Superintendent Dr. Clifford B. Janey, the report analyzes several key factors, such as the performance of DCPS financial and budgeting operations; how DCPS spends its money compared with other major urban school systems; and whether current school resources could be spent more effectively. The report was released during an event held at the historic Charles Sumner School and Museum in Northwest.

As always, I'm working on an ongoing basis collaboratively with Dr. Janey. I agreed with the report's recommendations that DCPS needs to use its resources more effectively to raise student achievement. It's my hope that this new information will lead to a more informed dialogue within our community and our public institutions about the education values we all share – and how we will use our resources to improve outcomes for our children.

Furthermore, the report was released on the eve of the DC Council's first reading of the proposed School Modernization Financing Act of 2006. I was pleased that the Council passed the act 13 to 0. With its passage, we move closer to realizing a complete overhaul and modernization of our city's public. The act would add \$1 billion for renovation and new construction over the next 10 years – all derived from sales taxes.

For more information on the Council of the Great City Schools and for a copy of its report, I encourage you to visit cgcs.org.

Summer Planning

It's never too early to start planning for your child's summer. So let this serve as a reminder to our readers that the DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) this week launched online registration for the upcoming eight-week camp season.

As it does every year, DPR is offering many day camp activities throughout our city and a residential co-ed camp in Scotland, Maryland. As Mayor, I'm deeply committed to ensuring that youngsters across our city have the opportunity to enjoy fun, safe and healthy summer activities.

Summer camp begins June 26, 2006 and runs through August 18, 2006. All camps are offered Monday through Friday. To register, or for locations and fees of DPR camping opportunities, please visit dpr.dc.gov or contact DPR's Camp Central Office at (202) 282-0730.



District Activities



Mayor Williams delivered remarks and was presented with a plaque during the Black History Month poetry event at the John A. Wilson Building. The occasion was an annual celebration of Mayor Williams' support of poetry and the arts in the District of Columbia. The event featured noted poets Dolores Kendrick, who is the Poet Laureate for the District of Columbia, E. Ethelbert Miller, Grace Cavalleri, and others. The spoken word artists performed the works of Langston Hughes, and African drumming added to the celebratory event.



Mayor Anthony Williams welcomed the District's first Bed Bath & Beyond store – a 50,000 square foot retail space near the Gallery Place Metro stop and the MCI Center. Mayor Williams cut the ribbon with the help of restaurateur B. Smith, Councilmember Vincent Orange, Herb Miller of Western Development and representatives from Bed Bath & Beyond.



Mayor Anthony Williams appeared on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *This Old House* with Master Carpenter Norm Abram and host Kevin O'Connor to talk about the renovation of an abandoned 1879 row house at 1134 6th Street, NW.

Community News

- [Elizabeth Berry Appointed Acting Director for New Department of the Environment](#)
- [Mayor Receives Ronald H. Brown Distinguished Leadership Award](#)
- [Mayor Anthony Williams' Reaction to Death of Wilhelmina Rolark, Former Ward 8 Councilmember](#)

Upcoming Events

[View All News Releases](#)

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|-------------|--|
| 2/17 | National Woman's Heart Day Health Fair
8 am – 2 pm
MCI Center
7th and F Streets, NW |
| 2/18 | 20th Annual Black History Invitational Swim Meet
All Day
Takoma Recreation Center
300 Van Buren Street, NW |
| 2/24 | ARAMARK Staffing Job Fair
10 am – 2 pm
Franklin Street One-Stop Career Center
1500 Franklin Street, NE |
| 2/25 | RFK Recruitment Fair (Several Companies Recruiting)
9 am – 2 pm
DC Armory
2001 East Capitol Street, SE |

